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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000559

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/09/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: LATEST FARC COMMUNIQUE SMACKS OF PAYBACK

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: A FARC communique that essentially threatened President Lucio Gutierrez "to keep his end of the bargain or else" hit Ecuadorian presses March 10. Early reactions were as expected: the GoE dismissed the remarks out-of-hand, while a handful of consulted ex-Ecuadorian military retreads claimed the sky was falling. Our take on the bulletin's release? Narcoterrorist jefe Raul Reyes, angry over Ecuador's recent capture and deportation of seven FARC members, sought to embarrass Gutierrez and so weaken him politically. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Internet versions of leading Ecuadorian dailies El Comercio and El Universo "broke" the communique mid-morning March 10. In 5/5 revolution-speak, the FARC "lament the servile, kowtowing government of Lucio Gutierrez and the fascist, interventionist Bush and Uribe regimes." "We call on the GoE and Gutierrez to fulfill its agreements," it continues, without providing further details on their content. The bulletin concludes by claiming the FARC had respected neighboring nations' sovereignty, limiting its operations to Colombian soil, and thus demanded reciprocal treatment.

3. (U) The GoE was quick to respond. Press Secretary Ivan Ona scoffed at the FARC allegations and asserted the government would offer no comment. Presidential brother Gilmar Gutierrez called the communique an Internet hoax, claiming that anyone with a Macintosh could post information to websites, assuming even Raul Reyes's identity.

4. (SBU) As is customary with pol/mil-related stories, Ecuadorian media sought retired (and even disgraced) military for comment. Their remarks were pure Chicken Little. Army Colonel Patricio Haro, denied general's stars and carrying a serious shoulder chip, argued the bulletin was proof the FARC were watching Ecuador. The reason? The GoE's efforts, in coordination with Washington and Bogota, to remove the narcoterrorist threat. Former Social Welfare Minister (and retired Colonel) Patricio Acosta, a year ago removed from the Cabinet and now a strident Gutierrez critic, too got heavy airtime. Acosta urged the president to come clean on his FARC connections just as he had, claiming there was nothing illegal in meeting with these groups.

5. (C) COMMENT: We have long heard rumors that Gutierrez conversed with FARC leaders sometime between the 2000 coup and his 2002 election. The president himself has confirmed meetings with numerous leftist groups during the period, although careful to avoid mention of any with clear terrorist connections. We are yet to see convincing proof of FARC campaign contributions or invisible-ink agreements, however. In the meantime, the president's numerous political enemies, the aforementioned Acosta among them, rehash these allegations for political gain. We therefore view Reyes's remarks with much suspicion, especially on timing.

6. (C) Two weeks back, Ecuadorian forces raided a home in south Quito that had functioned as a FARC clinic, apprehending seven insurgents and deporting them to Colombia. Unlike the year-earlier removal of FARC financier Simon Trinidad, also apprehended in Quito, this operation caused little navel gazing, even among isolationist Ecuadorian elites. Gutierrez, in a March 7 lunch with the Ambassador, beamed at mere mention of their arrest and handover, promising even greater cooperation in the narcoterrorist fight. We surmise that Reyes released the bulletin intending to politically hamstring the Ecuadorian leader from ordering future anti-FARC operations. END COMMENT.  
KENNEY